

Amendments to the Claims

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Currently Amended): A method of user-defined structured interaction online, comprising the steps of:

defining a social interaction genre for live computer-mediated communication between ~~two or more people~~ at least two users;

creating an operational instance of the genre, said instance being initialized to a predetermined state;

monitoring input from ~~online the~~ at least two users operatively connected to said instance;

specifying a graphic representation depicting a state of the instance, said graphic representation comprising graphic symbols representing each of the users;

updating ~~the~~ a state of the instance and responding to ~~user's~~ user requests if said input satisfies a criteria set by the instance's interaction rules; and

broadcasting the updated state to all ~~online the~~ at least two users operatively connected to the instance.

2. (Original): The method of claim 1 wherein the step of defining a social interaction genre includes one of copying and modifying a previously defined interaction genre.

3. (Currently Amended): The method of claim 1 wherein the step of ~~defining a social interaction genre~~ specifying a graphic representation includes specifying rules of a ~~the~~ graphic representation of the genre, including rules specifying how interactions are represented.

4. (Currently Amended): The method of claim 3 wherein the graphic ~~representation includes specified symbols representing respective users' roles~~ further represent each user's role.

5. (Original): The method of claim 3 wherein the graphic representation includes specified distances from references to proportionally represent action or nonaction of users.

6. (Original): The method of claim 3 wherein the graphic representation includes specified positions representing status of respective users.

7. (Original): The method of claim 1 wherein said step of creating an operation instance of a genre includes setting genre parameters.

8. (Original): The method of claim 7 wherein said genre parameters include genre roles.

9. (Original): The method of claim 7 wherein said genre parameters include rule parameters.

10. (Original): The method of claim 1 wherein said input includes one of text messages, audio clips and video clips.

11. (Currently Amended): The method of claim 3 wherein said input includes the ~~user's~~users' change in roles by dragging and dropping of graphics elements of the graphic representation of the state of the instance.

12. (Currently Amended): The method of claim 1 wherein said ~~user's~~users' requests include requesting to ask a question.

13. (Currently Amended): The method of claim 1 wherein said ~~user's~~users' requests include a request for a clarification.

14. (Original): The method of claim 1 wherein said step of monitoring includes monitoring the passage of time between inputs by a user.

15. (Currently Amended): A method of user-defined structured interaction online, comprising the steps of:

defining a social interaction genre for computer-mediated communication between ~~two or more people~~ at least two users, wherein said ~~computer-mediated communication~~ includes at least one of (a) ~~an interactive lecture between one or more lecturers and one or more spectators,~~ (b) ~~a debate between two or more debaters,~~ (c) ~~an interactive office communication between one or more office owners and one or more office visitors,~~ and (d) ~~an interactive courtroom communication between two or more people~~ social interaction genre enables a first user to ask a question to a second user, the second user to ask for clarification to the question to the first user, and the second user to answer the question to the first user;

creating an operational instance of the genre, said instance being initialized to a predetermined state;

monitoring input from ~~online~~ the at least two users operatively connected to said instance;

updating a state of the instance and executing specified actions in response to enforcement rules; and

broadcasting the updated state to all ~~online~~ the at least two users operatively connected to the instance.

16. (Original): The method of claim 15 wherein said step of updating the state of the instance and executing specified actions in response to enforcement rules includes sending the rule violator a message.

17. (Original): The method of claim 15 wherein said step of updating the state of the instance and executing specified actions in response to enforcement rules includes disconnecting a user violating said rules from the current instance.

18. (Original): The method of claim 15 wherein said step of updating the state of the instance and executing specified actions in response to enforcement rules includes barring a user violating said rules from future connections for a specified period of time.

19. (Original): The method of claim 15 wherein said step of updating the state of the instance and executing specified actions in response to enforcement rules includes modifying an iconic representation of a user violating said rules in a graphic representation of the genre instance.

20. (Original): The method of claim 15 wherein said step of updating the state of the instance in response to interaction rules includes changing the genre of the instance.

21. (Original): The method of claim 20 wherein the graphic representation of the instance is changed in response to the changing of its genre.

22. (Original): The method of claim 15 wherein said step of updating the state of the instance includes changing one or more genre parameters including genre roles.

23. (Original): The method of claim 15 wherein said updating step includes repositioning the icons representing the operative users.

24. (Original): The method of claim 28 wherein said updating step includes modifying icons to represent changes in roles of respective users.

25. (Original): The method of claim 1 wherein said step of broadcasting the updated state of the instance includes broadcasting the instance's genre rules.

26. (Original): The method of claim 1 wherein said step of broadcasting the updated state of the instance includes broadcasting the instance's genre parameters including role assignments.

27. (Original): The method of claim 1 wherein said step of broadcasting the updated state of the instance includes the broadcast of the graphic representation of the state of the instance.

28. (Original): The method of claim 1, further including the step of identifying a given user by moving a cursor over the icon representing that user.

29. (Currently Amended): A computer-based medium having stored programs readable by a computer for causing the computer to execute method steps for facilitating interaction among a plurality of users operatively connected to the computer, the method comprising the steps of:

receiving requests from the plurality of users to participate in a live computer-mediated social interactive discussion between ~~two or more people~~ the users, each of said users represented by a graphical symbol;

registering said users by storing user identifications and passwords of respective users;

storing said identifications and passwords in a user database;

authorizing said users as participants in the interactive discussion upon receiving a clearance signal;

setting parameters and rules governing the interactive discussion and informing the participants of the parameters and rules;

monitoring inputs from the participants during the interactive discussion; ~~and~~

enforcing penalties upon participants violating said rules; and

indicating on the graphical symbols the participants violating said rules.

30. (Original): The computer-based medium according to claim 29, wherein said clearance signal is given based on data on users stored in the user database.

31. (Original): The computer-based medium according to claim 29, further including the step of modifying said parameters by said participants.

32. (Original): The computer-based medium according to claim 29, wherein said step of enforcing penalties includes associating violation data with user data of violating participants in the user database.

33. (New): The method of claim 1, wherein updating the state of the instance and responding to user requests if said input satisfies a criteria set by the instance's interaction rules comprises updating the state of the instance and responding to user requests if said input satisfies a criteria set by the instance's interaction rules for interacting between the users.

34. (New): The method of claim 15, wherein updating a state of the instance and executing specified actions in response to enforcement rules comprises updating a state of the instance and executing specified actions in response to enforcement rules, said enforcement rules defining which users can communicate at a given time of the instance.